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SUBJECT: IRAQIS DESPERATE TO LEARN ENGLISH

1. Summary: Regional English Language Officer Rick Rosenberg conducted a workshop for English language teachers in Baghdad with participants from across Iraq on August 25-26. Countrywide participation showed the depth and intensity of the need for English language learning. Senior Iraqi officials attending the workshop want to work with us on a nation-wide plan for English language teaching and have stressed that they are not/not requesting US funding. End Summary.

¶2. The two day workshop organized by the Cultural Affairs section and our PRT colleagues included participants from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and secondary school and university instructors from Baghdad, Basrah, Irbil, Sulaymaniyah, DhiQar, Mosul, Anbar, and Nasariyah. Amman-based RELO Rick Rosenberg, in his first trip to Baghdad, engaged the teachers with student-centered learning strategies, insight into the worldwide English language teaching community and exposure to USG English teaching resources, both electronic and print.

¶3. Thirty years of academic isolation has left Iraqi English teaching professionals starved for contact and resources. The level of English language ability is generally dismal. Lack of exposure to native speakers leaves Iraqis prone to reinforcing elementary errors. After only two days of exposure provided by the workshop, they showed evidence of increased fluency and confidence. The participants expressed unbounded enthusiasm and commitment to resurrecting English language learning. A Ministry of Education official arrived the second day declaring that he had been Qawake all night listening to the Teaching Jazz Chants to Young Learners CDQ provided by the RELO. Distribution of the DepartmentQs English Teaching Forum Magazine, Shaping the Way We Teach English and other publications was riotous.

¶4. Addressing IraqQs tremendous English language needs is a top priority for Embassy Baghdad. Post has already nominated Iraqi teachers to participate in on-line E-teacher training and QShaping the Way We Teach EnglishQ training. Post will seek more such opportunities and encourage Iraqi teachers to partner on the training so we get double effect. Post will bring English language professionals for more workshops. We are working with Iraqi teachers of English to develop professional associations and to connect them with the US-based TESOL community. Post is distributing publications such as FORUM and other USG produced English language materials via the PRTs. We are also working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education on partnerships to support English learning. We are

approaching the GOI to broadcast English language learning materials on television.

¶15. Action Request: One of the conference participants was a returned Fulbright Language Teaching Assistantship (FLTA) alumna, and she mesmerized the conference with tales of her Fulbright experience and how she has used the experience in her teaching at the University of Baghdad. We believe there is a pool of excellent, qualified candidates in Iraq for the FLTA. Embassy Baghdad was dropped from the program last year without explanation. Post requests immediate reinstatement of Iraq in the Fulbright Language Teaching Assistantship Program (FLTA).

¶16. Action Request: The Public Affairs section has already recruited one 3161 English Teaching specialist to focus on English teaching programs in Baghdad, and we are in the process of recruiting a second, who will concentrate on liaison with the PRTQs and English teachers outside of the capital. RELO Rosenberg's assistance in this workshop was so outstanding that we look forward to engaging his expertise at an early date to orient and train our new staff.

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